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Letter dated 13 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 20 July 1999 addressed to you from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations (A/53/1024-S/1999/811).

This letter obscures the fact that the Government of Lebanon is directly responsible for the volatile situation along its southern border, and that it continues to reject available means for resolving the conflict.

Indeed, even as the parties to the Middle East conflict are presented with opportunities to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace, Lebanon continues to openly support a terror campaign aimed against the very existence of a neighbouring State. Simultaneously, Lebanon refuses to respond to Israel's repeated invitation to negotiate the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978, which would resolve the conflict. It has been more than 18 months since this invitation was extended, and Lebanon has opted to allow the conflict to continue, and the human toll to rise, rather than negotiate a solution. The perpetuation of the conflict, therefore, is Lebanon's own doing.

I wish to recall the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States, contained in resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, providing that sovereignty carries a responsibility not to allow terrorist acts to be organized or prepared in one's territory.

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* A/54/150.

The policies of Lebanon stand in direct contradiction to this provision. Not only does the Government of Lebanon refuse to disarm and restrain these groups, but Lebanon has openly adopted the terrorist group Hizballah as its own, calling it the "Lebanese national resistance" (see A/53/878-S/1999/333).

Let there be no confusion about the threat posed by Hizballah. Hizballah does not act as a "resistance" group, and its threat does not end with an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. As Mohammed Ra'ed, head of Hizballah's council, said in reference to Israel: "There are numerous ways in which we can pursue the enemies, even after they withdraw from our occupied land" (Radio Nur, 24 December 1998). Moreover, as recently as last month, Hizballah leader Sheikh Hassan Nassrallah made clear the organization's opposition to the very existence of the State of Israel: "We have our view of occupied Palestine, which we consider to be occupied from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, and no one has a right to cede one iota of its soil" (Egyptian satellite channel, Cairo, 1 August 1999). Yet, the Prime Minister of Lebanon has repeatedly praised the "jihad" of Hizballah and its alleged "resistance" (Voice of Lebanon, 16 February 1999).

This policy coincides with Lebanon's continued rejection of a negotiated solution to end the conflict. Resolution 425 (1978) calls not only for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in the area. The declared willingness of the Lebanese Government to host an elaborate terrorist infrastructure, to permit its regular reinforcement and to endorse its operations directed against a neighbouring country is totally incompatible with the last two provisions of the resolution.

Taken together with its refusal to negotiate a peaceful solution, the policies of Lebanon leave Israel with no choice but to exercise its right to self-defence in accordance with international law. Nevertheless, Israel once again calls upon the Government of Lebanon to return to the negotiating table and to restore peace and security along our common border.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 161 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative